

Bats

are mammals, but they can fly by using wing-like flaps of skin on their arms. They can navigate and find food in total darkness by sending out sound waves and listening for them to bounce back. Bats sleep during the day and are active at night. They mate in the fall and their babies are born and nursed in the spring or early summer. In Washington some bats hibernate in the winter, while others migrate to warmer climates.

There are several species of bats in the Northwest. All of them eat insects, spiders, and beetles. Bats live in all areas of Washington state. They roost in trees, buildings, burrows, openings in rocks, and other places where they can raise their young and get shelter from predators and the weather.

Bats should not be killed needlessly.

Bats play an important role in the balance of nature. They eat insects, helping to control pests. Also, bat droppings (called guano) are a source of nitrogen rich fertilizers.

For More Information

Contact your local health department

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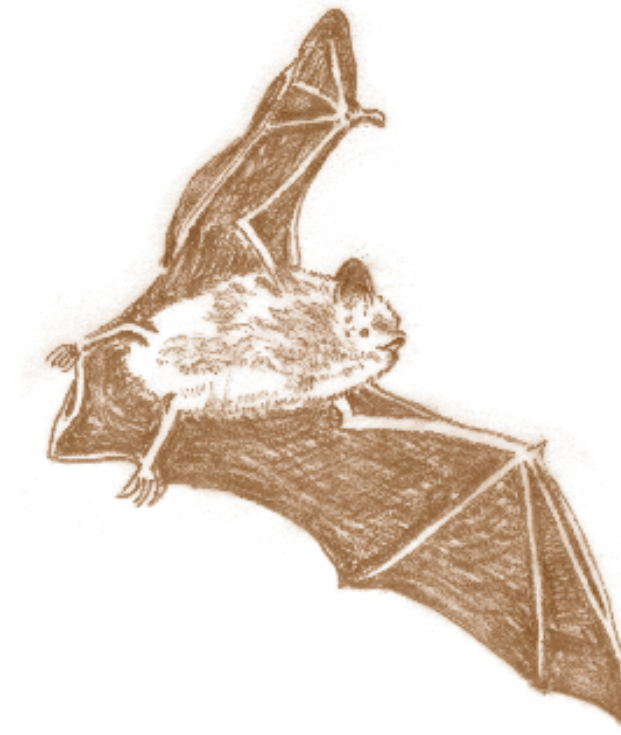
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An Information Guide

Bats & Rabies Prevention



Rabies

is a virus that can affect people and animals. The virus gets into the body through a bite or a scratch. It attacks the brain and nervous system.

Rabies and Humans

It is very rare for a person to get rabies. In 1995, a child in Centralia was the first person to die from rabies in nearly 60 years. She was exposed by a bat that got into her bedroom while she was asleep. A man in Shelton died from bat rabies in 1997.

Proper treatment can prevent rabies in a person who is exposed. But once a person starts to have symptoms of rabies, it is almost always fatal.

Rabies and Animals

All mammals, including dogs, cats, livestock, and wild animals, can get the rabies virus. In Washington, the last case of rabies in a dog or cat was in the 1970s. In other parts of the U.S., raccoons, skunks, foxes or coyotes are known to carry rabies.

Bats are the only known carriers of rabies in Washington. Rabid bats have been found across the state. Bats are tested when they may have exposed people or animals to rabies. About 5–10% of these bats carry rabies. But probably less than 1% of all bats have the virus.

If you. . .

- . . .have any contact with a bat
- . . .find a bat in your home, even if you do not think you were bitten
- . . .find your pet with a bat
- . . .are bitten or scratched by any wild or stray animal

Please do these!

- **Wash** any bite or wound with soap and water.
- **Contact** your doctor, clinic or emergency room.
- **Contact** your local health department.
- **Safely capture** the bat, if possible. Use heavy leather gloves, a heavy towel, or tongs. Put it in a can and cover with a tight lid. Do not damage the head of the bat, because the brain is needed for testing.

Prevent Rabies

Do not handle wild animals, especially bats.

- Teach your children never to touch or handle bats, even dead ones. Have children tell an adult if they ever find a bat on the ground, in the house, at school, or with a pet.
- Most wild animals are not seen during the daytime. If you do see one and it is acting strangely, leave it alone!
- Wild animals do not make good pets. As cute as baby animals are, they will be wild when they get older.

Protect dogs and cats from rabies

- Pets may get rabies if bitten by a rabid animal. Protect your pets and yourself by getting them vaccinated.
- Before rabies vaccines were available, pets commonly got rabies. Each year more cats than dogs are diagnosed with rabies, partly because cats catch bats and because cats often are not vaccinated.

Rabies

Bats

Keep bats out of your home

- To bat-proof your house, close up all outside openings larger than 3/8 of an inch in walls, roofs, and floors. Put screens on windows and doors.
- If bats are living in your house, close up all but one or two of their entrances. After a few days the bats will get used to leaving by the openings they can still use. Then one evening, after they fly out, close up these entrances. One way is to hang a plastic sheet over the entrance. The plastic will allow the bats to fly out, but not back in. Watch around your house the next few days to make sure they are all gone.
- Bats are born in the spring or early summer. If you have bats in your house, it is best to close up their entrances in early spring or fall so you don't trap young bats inside.
- Contact a licensed pest control operator if you need help with bat-proofing.

What about bat houses?

Some home owners build bat houses to provide roosting places for bats. But bats usually find their own places to live.

If you decide to put up a bat house, keep it away from places where you live, play or work. That way there will be less chance of exposure.

Remember to get your pets vaccinated against rabies.



*Roosting bat
clings to a groove
in the wood inside
a bat house*



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